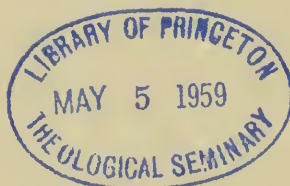


Abel H. Huizinga

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The Book of Esther

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#### IV. THE BOOK OF ESTHER.

THE various literary and ethical and religious characteristics of the Book of Esther, and the history of opinions regarding it, in the Jewish and in the Christian church, give it, in some respects at least, a position quite unique, and accordingly invite our study.

The story of the book is, briefly, as follows: The Persian king, Ahasuerus, makes a magnificent feast, first for all his princes and nobles, and then for all the inhabitants of Susa. The king orders Vashti, the queen, to appear in public. She refuses, and is deposed from her position as queen. It being necessary to choose a new queen, fair young virgins are brought in from all parts of the empire, that from them the king may make his choice. The result is, that Esther, a beautiful Jewish maiden, the adopted daughter of Mordecai, is chosen. Mordecai subsequently reveals a conspiracy against the king, and thus saves the king's life. He refuses, moreover, to give the customary obeisance to Haman, the king's favorite. Haman, in revenge, plots to slay the whole Jewish race throughout the empire. Having been obliged by the command of the king to be an involuntary instrument in conferring high honor upon Mordecai, his passion of revenge becomes still deeper. Esther, however, skilfully using her charms and power as the king's favorite, obtains what is virtually a complete reversal of the destructive decree. Haman is hanged upon the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai. The Jews, under the encouragement of a royal decree, fall upon their enemies, and slay them. The festival of Purim is instituted to commemorate this glorious deliverance.

The literary art with which the story is told is very apparent. It is manifest both in the skill with which the characters of the chief *dramatis personæ* are drawn, and in the conduct and development of the action or narrative.

Ahasuerus (in profane history known as Xerxes, 485-465 B. C., the invader of Greece, 480 B. C.) is the typical capricious, irresponsible, sensual, oriental despot. The way in which he exalts



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and puts down favorites, indulges his appetites, yields to the charms of a woman, and permits or instigates extensive slaughter among his people, is thoroughly in keeping with the character of such sovereigns in general, and with what we know, from other sources, of this monarch in particular. (Of. Herodotus, vii. 35, 37; ix. 107 *et seq.*; Strabo, xiv. 634.)

Haman is a satanic mixture of ambition, revenge, hatred, and cruelty. First, clever, cool, and calculating, he is, later on, carried away by the vehemence of his passion. Not one man alone, but a whole people or race, is needed to satiate his wrath.

Mordecai is a remarkable character. He is representative of a class for which the Jewish race is famous, of which Joseph and Daniel are examples in ancient, and Lord Beaconsfield in modern times, all men who, from the humblest beginnings, have won for themselves distinction and honor and power at a foreign court.

Read between the lines in this story of Mordecai, and you will see, moreover, a number of characteristics which are often combined in the representatives of his race: A tender family feeling, and the cultivation of a pure, affectionate home life; an exalted personal piety of the grim, stern, Old Testament sort; high, calm, and strong and strength-giving faith in God, and faith in the mission and destiny of his people as assured in the purposes of God; a passionate and perfectly unbending devotion to the religious principles and traditions of the fathers; and withal shrewdness and ability of the highest order in his dealings with men at large, and in the management of worldly affairs. Truly, he is a grand character.

Esther, finally, full of grace and charm and courtesy, knows how to use her charms to the best advantage; with some natural misgivings at the start as to the result of her undertaking, but gathering strength, decision, and passion as she proceeds, she shows herself a true daughter of her people.

The way, moreover, in which the plot (if we may so call it) of the story, the development, and the *denouement*, are brought out, and the way in which the interest of the reader is sustained through all the changing scenes, in the use of fear, suspense, climax, solution, and satisfaction, are masterful. The story opens

with a vivid description of oriental magnificence and splendor. The power of contrast is used most effectively in describing the humble Jewish maiden elevated to nearly the loftiest position in the empire, on the one hand, and in the exaltation and subsequent degradation of Haman, on the other hand. The adherence of Mordecai to the religious scruples of his fathers threatens to involve his whole race in the direst calamity. At the very last moment, when all seems to be lost, deliverance is wrought through an apparently most trivial circumstance, a wakeful night of the king. The deliverance is as complete and absolute as it is unexpected. The claims of the Jews to be the peculiar favorites of God, the chosen nation, the objects of his most fostering care, with a lofty mission for all ages and for all nations, are once more fully vindicated. The destruction destined for them is turned upon their enemies. God's people are delivered. Human passions are controlled. Wicked designs are frustrated. The sinners are punished. Haman himself, the arch-instigator of the purposed destruction, is hanged upon the very same gallows which he had prepared with special care for Mordecai as the chief object of his wrath. This but caps the climax of the series of events in which previously he had served as the unwilling, but helpless and efficient agent in Mordecai's exaltation.

Remember, moreover, that Mordecai was of the tribe of Benjamin, a descendant of the family of Saul, the first king of Israel, and that Haman, the Agagite, was doubtless a representative of the royal line of Agag, the king of Amalek against whom Saul waged a fierce, but somewhat incomplete, warfare, and you will see here another, and a most effective, characteristic touch. Saul evidently did not go far enough in his slaughter of Agag and the Amalekites. The descendants of some royal scion of that tribe, spared by him, many centuries after come within an ace of destroying the whole Jewish race. That omission of Saul, that lack of thoroughness on his part, severely rebuked as it was at the time by Samuel, comes to cost them dear. At the critical moment, however, Providence interposes. Mordecai, the fellow-clansman of Saul, in procuring the destruction of Haman, the Agagite, finishes the work which Saul had left unfinished.

The genealogical and family records must be fully and accurately kept. The family and tribal feeling must make its influence predominant in every department of life, even in religion. The family is a unit, extending latitudinally, so to speak, and embracing every living member of the clan or race; and longitudinally, reaching backward and forward, it binds the past, the present, and the future in a mysterious bond. The sins of the fathers are charged against them with unerring accuracy, and visited upon the children. Circumstances which seem trivial at the time will vitally affect the history and course of events many centuries later. These are some of the latent ideas, some of the subterranean currents of thought, as we may term them, obscurely present in this Book of Esther.

There are a few obvious facts in connection with the Book of Esther, which are of such a kind as to suggest and induce a closer study of its phenomena. These facts are as follows: The name of God is not once mentioned in it. It is nowhere quoted or referred to in the New Testament. Many have questioned its right to a place in the canon, the voice of tradition not seeming to be absolutely unanimous. In modern times its tone and spirit have been severely criticised on ethical grounds, and doubts have been thrown on its historical accuracy and the trustworthiness of its statements in several particulars.

We may, accordingly, frame our statement of the critical problems of the Book of Esther as follows: What are the religious and theological conceptions of this book? What is its place in the history of revelation, and in the history of the development of God's kingdom upon earth? What is its place in the canon, and how can that place be vindicated? What can be said as to its historical accuracy, in the light of recent criticisms upon that accuracy?

Although the name of God is not mentioned in this book, and although it is nowhere quoted by Christ or the apostles, yet its high religious and spiritual tone and purpose and aim are strikingly manifest.

Two explanations have been given of the omission of the name of God. One is, that it was the result of a fear, especially preva-



lent in later Jewish times, that the sacred name of God might be profaned by too frequent use, by any use except that in the most solemn religious services, and especially by its use in Gentile mouths, as this book from the nature of its contents might be supposed to find frequent Gentile readers. Another reason assigned is that it was desired that the festival of the Purim, of the occasion and institution of which this book gives an account, and at which it was destined to be read, was desired to be as joyful, light-hearted, and hilarious as possible, and hence the too great solemnity connected with the name of God was to be avoided. Both of these explanations are inadequate. We shall see subsequently that the omission of the name of God must be explained on other grounds.

However this may be, the whole book, as already noted in the description of the character of Mordecai, is intensely religious. But the religiousness and piety are of the Old Testament lofty, but narrow, national and particular character. It is the piety which regards the nation, the Jewish race, as the special and peculiar favorite of heaven. God watches over them with the most intense, and minute, and loving care. It is the piety that expresses itself in the words of the one hundred and thirty-seventh Psalm: "O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." We are ready to concede that there are limitations in piety of this sort when considered from a modern, New Testament, Christian point of view, but we are not ready to concede that such limitations are incompatible with a true and real possession of the Spirit of the Lord, or with the rightfulness of the place of such a piety in the historical development of the kingdom of God upon earth. If only the historical situation, the necessary individual and racial limitations, and the law of development are kept in view, all becomes plain.

The religious and theological conceptions of the book, and its place in the history of revelation, will become further manifest if we consider the aim and purpose of its composition, and the significance of the events which it records.

The aim of the book is simply and obviously that of recording and publishing and preserving the memory of the wonderful deliverance which God wrought for his people. This knowledge must serve to keep alive the traditions of the nation. It will deepen and strengthen the confidence of the people in God, and in their own future as assured in the purposes of God. At any future time when the might of the oppressor waxes wanton against the despised, oppressed Jews, whether it be the might of Spain in the fifteenth, or the might of Russia in the nineteenth, century, then the memory of this deliverance from the wrath of Haman will serve to cheer and to sustain.

But there is a peculiarity about this deliverance which must still be noted, and which is of the highest importance. It is not like the deliverance under Moses from the tyranny of Pharaoh, or the deliverance under Hezekiah and Isaiah from the army of Sennacherib, or even like the restoration under Zerubbabel from the Babylonian exile. All these deliverances had been foretold and mediated and brought about by or in connection with prophetic activity. Yes, we may say that God in a manner spoke to the people and visibly wrought salvation out of heaven in their presence. Thus the restoration under Cyrus had been distinctly foretold by both Isaiah and Jeremiah. And in the royal proclamation, issued no doubt under the influence of instruction received from those who were familiar with these prophecies, Cyrus says: "The Lord God of heaven hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem." But in the deliverance under Mordecai and Esther there is no prophet of the Lord. There is no visible or audible sign whatever that the Lord is working for his people. His voice is not heard. His eye is not seen. His hand is concealed. In so far the work of deliverance is entirely on a level with all the ordinary administration of his providence. Yet the deliverance is most signal. There could be no mistake about it. It was certainly from the Lord.

Now, what was the significance of all this? Remember the circumstances of the time and you will see. Prophetic activity was about to cease from Israel. So far as Judaism, as a distinct development, and henceforth destined to move on in its own sepa-

rate channel, was concerned, it was about to cease forever. The prophetic activity of Christ and the apostles belongs to a new and distinct era. In such a juncture the pious people,—those of them who realized the situation, and no doubt some of them did,—must have felt as though they were embarking on an unknown sea, without compass, rudder, or helmsman. At this critical juncture God accomplishes a wonderful deliverance for his people without the intervention of any prophet, simply in the ordinary ruling and guiding of his providence. That signal, unmistakable lesson must be recorded that it may teach the nation, the race, for all time to come, that, even though no prophet speaks to them, still God himself watches over them and will keep them safe. Hence this history was committed to writing. Hence it was given a place in the sacred canon.

We find, then, in this book something more than a general exhibition and proof of an all-ruling providence. It teaches a special lesson to Judaism, namely, that God continues his care over the chosen people even after the dispensation of prophets has ceased. It teaches that this protection is thenceforth to be administered by an unseen hand, apart from the ministration of prophets, apart from specific revelations, visions, and miracles, simply in the ordinary course of Divine providence. And this abstraction, elimination, or withdrawing of all prophetic elements from the history of these events is carried so far, that even the name of God is not mentioned. God is left to be present by unmistakable inference rather than by explicit mention.

A mother who teaches her child to walk will first support the child by her hand. The time comes, however, when the child must take the first few steps alone. The hand of the mother is still there, even though it is not felt.

A student of art who has made himself familiar with the style of a certain painter by studying the pictures which he knows to have been painted by that artist, will find it a good test of his proficiency as an art-critic, if, when confronted by an unmarked production of the same artist, he is, nevertheless, able to assign it as his work.

So God wishes the Jews to recognize the work of his provi-

dence, even though no prophet speaks in the name of the Lord.

This lesson, moreover, was intended directly and primarily for Judaism, as henceforth to constitute a distinct chapter in the history of the development of God's kingdom upon earth. For with all their short-comings, with all their fearful sins, the Jews have never ceased to be part of that kingdom. The promises unto the fathers, the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, have never been annulled. And this lesson, as intended primarily for Judaism, bears only indirectly and inferentially upon Christianity. Hence it is that this book is nowhere quoted or referred to in the New Testament. There was no occasion to quote it. It contained no type, no immediate application, no prophecy for Christianity. But Judaism is to draw instruction, strength, and consolation from this book. For a high and far-reaching purpose, God has spared, and is now sparing, the Jews. That purpose is still in the future. The deliverance under Mordecai is only the first and most typical of a series of deliverances, extending all through subsequent history. Again and again has this strange people been brought to the very brink of destruction. Again and again it has been rescued from this destruction by the unseen hand of God. And still this history is going on. And it will go on until the purposes of God are accomplished, "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved."

Before leaving this part of my subject, namely, the religious and theological conceptions of this book, and its place in the history of the development of God's kingdom upon earth, I may remark that this book, in the respects now under consideration, sustains peculiar relations to two other books of the Old Testament, namely, the Book of Jonah and the Book of Job. We may say that, in one respect, it is the antipode to the Book of Jonah; in another respect, to the Book of Job.

The Book of Jonah represents the prophet of the Lord as going forth, much against his will, but under the direction of Jehovah, on the first and only foreign missionary expedition recorded in the Old Testament. At a time when Israel herself was repeatedly falling into apostasy, and refusing to listen to the prophets

of the Lord, God seemed to wish, humanly and reverently speaking, to shame them into submission and obedience by showing them how a foreign, heathen nation, with none of the Israelites' marvellous advantages, was, nevertheless, ready to yield, and to yield at once and thoroughly, to the first distinct effort that was made to convince them of their sins, and to remind them of their impending judgment if these sins were continued. If the Ninevites repented in sackcloth and ashes, under the preaching of one prophet, continued for only a short time, how much the more ought Israel to repent and to obey the voice of the Lord, to whom the Lord had sent many prophets during a long succession of ages?

Moreover, in the Book of Jonah, the horizon is widened. Israel, as typified in the prophet, is seen in her true light, as the great conservator of the knowledge and worship of the one true God, the religious teacher of the nations. The nations, as typified in Nineveh, are represented as learning their lesson from Israel. That is one aspect of the relation of Israel and the nations.

The other and opposite aspect is presented in the Book of Esther. The nations combine in hostile fury against the Israelites, or Jews, and aim to oppress and destroy them. God, however, interposes, and rescues them.

Both of these aspects, these two opposite poles, as we may call them, have been presented again and again in subsequent times. The relation of the Jews to the other nations and races of the world is the standing enigma and paradox of history. The nations owe a debt to the Jews which they can never repay. We have learnt from them, humanly speaking, the knowledge of the true God, and our relations to him. We have learnt from them the divine moral and spiritual ideals of holiness and righteousness of character. Yet this knowledge has been most unwillingly imparted, just as Jonah was unwilling to go on his mission. On the other hand, the history of the relation of Jews and Gentiles has been one long chapter of outrages, persecutions, extortions, and massacres, compared with which the ferocity of Haman, the Agagite, seems kind.

Israel as the recipient of a divine revelation, the ethical and



spiritual and religious teacher of mankind—such is the lesson of the Book of Jonah. The Jew hated and despised, and persecuted and cruelly maltreated at the hands of those Gentiles who owe to him their moral and spiritual light; the Jew constantly rescued from dire destruction only by the direct interposition of an unseen, but special, providence—this is the picture presented to us in the Book of Esther. The two books are complementary. Together they give us a complete prefigurement and anticipation of the career of the Jewish race.

From another point of view the Book of Esther touches vitally, but, in a sense, antithetically, the Book of Job. The Book of Job presents an extreme example of the divine permission of evil to fall upon the pious, either from Satan or from satanic men. Such permission may take place for good and sufficient reasons, and without infringing in the least upon the divine power and justice and lovingkindness, and without affecting the true and highest welfare of those who suffer such evils.

In the Book of Esther, on the other hand, the calamity is impending, but it is not allowed to be executed. God shows that he can, if need be, if in his wisdom he thinks best, arrest and frustrate the designs of the wicked against his children, even when they are on the eve of accomplishment.

For our part, we are glad that both these sides of the providence of God are presented in Scripture.

We must now briefly survey the testimony of the church as to the place of the Book of Esther in the canon, before passing on to the last division of our subject, the consideration of modern attacks and criticisms that have been made upon it.

In the Septuagint translation, the Book of Esther appears with sundry additions which do not add to its value. Philo does not quote it in his acknowledged writings, but that counts nothing against it, for neither does he quote Nehemiah, Ruth, Chronicles, Ezekiel, Lamentations, Daniel, Ecclesiastes, or Canticles.

In the New Testament it is not quoted, but this has already been explained. Josephus makes use of the book, and retells the whole story in his own way.

There are some who maintain that the canonicity of the Book

of Esther was disputed in the time of our Lord, but others, more rightly, refer the traditions solely to opposition to the introduction of a new feast. Mention will be made of this further on in the course of this paper. But at any rate, whatever opposition there may have been to it at one time, ultimately it was received as canonical. The Talmudic passages quoted as bearing on this matter are: Jerusalem Talmud, Megillith lxx. 4; compare Midrash, Ruth, xlv. 3; Megilla 7<sup>a</sup>. Maimonides is reported to have said that in the time of the Messiah all the sacred writings would perish, except the Torah and Esther.

In the accepted Jewish canon it has, at present, a place in the third division, the Writings (*the Kethubim, Hagiographa*). It is one of the five Megilloth, or rolls, which are read publicly at certain sacred seasons, the "Song of Songs" at Passover, "Ruth" at Pentecost, "Lamentations" on the 9th of Ab (the day on which Jerusalem was destroyed), "Ecclesiastes" at the feast of the Tabernacles, "Esther" at the feast of the Purim.

We need not be disturbed by the fact, that, in the New Testament church, occasional doubts have been expressed as to the canonicity of the Book of Esther. Thus Melito of Sardis (see Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* iv. 26) omits to mention it in his account of the canon. This may have been purely accidental. Athanasius seems to reckon it among the deuterocanonical or apocryphal writings of the Old Testament (see Athanasius, in *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, American Ed., Vol. IV., p. 552). Luther had a strong feeling against it, but this was pure subjective criticism.

The character of the book, as containing a lesson specifically for Judaism, made it liable to be misunderstood in Christian circles. The judgment of the church at large, however, as voiced in the favorable testimony of Josephus, Cyrill, Origen, and Augustine, the Council of Laodicea, Epiphanius, and Jerome, has received it as canonical. Such testimony easily outweighs the unfavorable testimony of Gregory of Nazianzum, Melito, Junilius, Leontius, and Nicephorus.

One peculiarity about its place in the canon is, that it is often grouped with the books of Tobith and Judith to form a sort of triad. So in Athanasius, in the passage referred to, and in the

lists of the Codex Alexandrinus, and Codex Vaticanus. (See *Diestel, Geschichte des Alten Testaments, in der Christliche Kirche*, Jena, 1869.)

In modern times, as a matter of course, the book has received a generous share of doubt and denial. As to its historical truthfulness, some have accepted it entirely just as it stands. Others have accepted the substance, as more or less true, with some additions and perversions. Others have rejected it *in totum*. The spirit and tone of the book have also been severely criticised. Some have failed to find any religion or piety in it, only a bitter, national pride, and hatred and resentment against other nationalities.

A modern writer says: "The facts that the divine name does not appear in it (the Book of Esther), that no ascription of its rescue to Jehovah is anywhere made, and that the intention of the author is plainly not so much to exalt a delivering providence as to commend the extra-biblical feast of Purim, all evince the low moral and religious tone of this writing. And when, to these ethical difficulties, we add the historical, and take into account the history of its canonizing, we can only regard the Book of Esther as standing upon the outermost limits, if not wholly outside, of Sacred Scripture." (G. T. Ladd, *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, Vol. I., p. 465.)

We trust that a careful and unbiased consideration of the exposition of the spirit, aim, and tone of the book, and of the place which it occupies in the history of the development of God's kingdom, which has already been given in this article, will be sufficient to show how unfounded such a criticism is, and how completely it misses a correct understanding of the scope of this book. As to the "narrow Jewish spirit of revenge and persecution" which the book is said to evince, such criticism forgets that a royal decree had gone forth that the Jews were to be massacred, that this decree could not possibly be directly rescinded, and that the only way out of the difficulty and danger was by a counter-decree, permitting and encouraging the Jews to arm themselves in self-defence and be the first to attack.

The following points have been raised against it on historical

grounds: It is said that Esther cannot have been the queen of Ahasuerus, or Xerxes. According to Herodotus (vii. 114; ix. 112), his queen during these years was Amestris, a superstitious and cruel woman, who cannot possibly be identified with Esther. But there is nothing to forbid the supposition that Esther, as one of the royal harem, and Amestris (assuming that the chronology of Herodotus is correct) were both queens at the same time, but in different senses, and with a different degree of rank and power and favor. It is not true, as has been alleged, that the position of Esther leaves no room for the collateral or superior position of Amestris. This also disposes of the objection that the king was limited, in the choice of a queen, to one of the seven noble families of Persia.

Another objection is found in the supposed artificiality of the story. It seems to read as a romance rather than as a history. The incidents at each stage seem laid so as to prepare the way for the next, which duly follows without hitch or interruption. The climax of difficulty and danger for the Jews is reached, from which, by an unexpected turn of events, they are suddenly released. Such criticism, however, is purely subjective. It would apply with equal force against many other historical narratives. Truth is often stranger than fiction. We cannot build any arguments upon such appearances. Besides, the incidents in the Book of Esther were so ordered, and the events recorded, because they were typical. That is, they were to contain a lesson for all time to come.

The criticisms of Lagarde are well known. (See *Purim, ein Beitrag zur Gesch. der Rel.* 1887.) He denies the existence of any old Persian word *pur* for lot. He would derive the Jewish festival, with its name *Purim*, from an old Persian feast in honor of the dead, called *Fordigan*, and held during the last ten days of the year. That the Jews, at a time of the deepening and strengthening of their Jewish religious exclusiveness, should have taken and adopted from a foreign nationality, from those who were hated as enemies and oppressors, such a religious feast, would seem to me absolutely improbable, even if there were no other difficulties in the way of this supposition.

The dates of the two feasts are different. Purim is held during two days; the feast of the dead during ten. The characters of the two feasts are not known to have any resemblance to each other. The alleged similarity of names, *Fordigan* and *Purim*, is not close enough to warrant any supposition of kinship. This criticism, accordingly, falls to the ground.

On the other hand, in favor of the historical truthfulness of the book, the following points may be noted:

The knowledge of the conditions of the Persian empire and court is minute and accurate. The foreign names mentioned have been confirmed as good Persian forms. (*Oppert Annales de la Philosophie Chretienne*, 1864.) The account of the character of Xerxes is confirmed by what we know of him from other sources. (See *Herodotus*, Books VII. and IX.) The geographical and chronological details tally. Herodotus mentions both Indians and Ethiopians as forming part of the army of Xerxes. The interval between the deposition of Vashti (third year) and the choice of Esther (seventh year) was the time of the Grecian expedition. Extensive massacres have, unfortunately, never been unfamiliar in history. The existence of the Purim festival itself is, finally, as certain a corroboration of the truthfulness of the narrative, as the Fourth-of-July celebrations among us give evidence of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on that day.

There are some writers who gravely maintain that the very aim and purpose of the Book of Esther was to give an account of the origin of the Purim festival, and to commend its observance. This is about as sensible as it would be to say that the aim of John Fiske in writing his *War of Independence* was to give an account of the origin of our Fourth-of-July celebrations. The aim of the book is not to give an account of the commemorative feast, but rather to give an account of the deliverance which the feast commemorates. That the feast does exist, however, and that it is connected by an unbroken, unquestioned tradition with the events here recorded, is strong proof of the truthfulness of the record.

It was called *Purim*, as is alleged, from the Persian word



*pur*, the equivalent of the Hebrew *gorál*, or lot, because Haman used the lot to determine the day on which the massacre was to be made. No Persian word *pur*, lot, has been found, but the Neo-Persian *bâra*, time, *pâra*, piece, and *behr*, portion, are compared. The deliverance, and consequently its subsequent commemorative feast, took place on the 14th and 15th of Adar. The Talmudic tract, *Megilla*, treats of this feast. It mentions that its introduction met with opposition on the part of the Jews in Palestine. This was natural. They lived in what they considered the metropolis, the headquarters of Judaism, and how could these men on the frontier, these backwoodsmen, presume to impose upon them the novelty of a new feast! Eighty-five elders, and among them more than thirty so-called prophets, protested against it. But the feast had come to stay. In 2 Macc. xv. 36, it is mentioned as the day of Mordecai. Some have found a reference to it in the feast of the Jews mentioned in John v. 1. But others regard this as improbable. With the decision of this matter, however, is connected an important chronological question touching the life of our Lord. Josephus testifies to its existence in his time. (Arch. xi. 6, 13.)

We sum up in the following conclusions: There is no good reason for doubting the historical truthfulness of the book. That there are many good reasons for accepting that historical truthfulness. Individuals have, at times, questioned its place in the canon, but the judgment of the church at large has accepted it. Its religious spirit and aim, moreover, are, in a sense, unique. It teaches the continued care and watchfulness of God over his chosen covenant people, even after the dispensation of the prophets had ceased. It teaches that the protection of God, so far as Judaism is concerned, is thenceforth to be administered by an unseen hand, apart from the ministration of prophets, apart from specific revelations and signs, simply in the ordinary course of his providence. Hence the name of God is not even mentioned. It is meant to convey this lesson primarily to Judaism, as a distinct chapter or division of the kingdom of God upon earth. Hence it is not quoted in the New Testament.

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*New Paltz, N. Y.*

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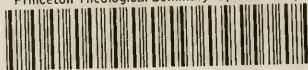
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